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Two Christmas Gifts

L. A. B.



With love

from Nina.

Ymas. 1909.



" LARRY "

Two
Christmas Gifts

BY
E. A. D.



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1909



"LARRY"

Two Christmas Gifts

BY
F. A. D.



TORONTO
WILLIAM BRIGGS
1909

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Two Christmas Gifts

"It is an ideal Christmas Eve," said Mr. Douglas to his pale, pretty wife, as he stole softly to her bedside.

"The air is clear and pleasantly cold, and just enough snow for good sleighing. We do not always have such good Xmas weather in our city."

"I am glad," was the answer.

"You will, I hope, be able to give the children a sleigh drive to-morrow."

"If you are better, sweetheart," said the husband, and then as the nurse re-entered the room he went away. Went, as was his invariable custom, to have a last look at the children "nestled snug" in their beds.

The only daughter, Doris, was asleep, and when he kissed her she murmured "Mamma." Her father patted her shoulder softly, turned the night-light lower and closed the door.

As he neared the room where his two boys slept he heard them talking, and paused to listen.

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"Are you going to sleep, Cliff? I am not. I am going to keep awake and listen for Santa. Are you?"

"Y-e-s, I want to see the reindeer," was Cliff's sleepy answer.

But sleep, nature's great restorer, soon claimed its own, and the boys were no doubt happily dreaming of the day so dear to children the world over.

It speaks well for this hustling, money-making generation of ours that there are not many who, Scrooge-like, deem Xmas Day and its festivities "humbug." Happy are the grown-weary, care-worn hearts that rejoice in the children's joy and thus renew their youthfulness on this, the most joyous day of the year.

Mr. Douglas, without the mother-help that Xmas Eve, made the tree look beautiful with its load of gifts and pretty, glittering decorations, perching a presentment of jolly old St. Nicholas on the top-most branch.

Then, sitting at the window, he watched the busy throng on one of the business streets which he could see in the distance.

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Up and down, to and fro, a never-ending panorama.

Sleighs laden with good cheer or pleasure seekers, electric cars crowded to their fullest capacity, men and women hurrying home with their arms full of parcels, hustling, jostling, knocking against each other in perfect good humor.

The watcher noticed an incident illustrative of "good will to men" just opposite his window. A richly-dressed woman was crossing the sidewalk to get into a waiting sleigh, when a poor woman carrying her turkey—no doubt a Xmas gift—ran against her, giving her a blow with the legs of the lordly bird.

The poor woman was most earnest in her apology, but the lady laughed as she inspected the bird who had made her the object of his last kick. Then something passed from one hand to another. There was an earnest "Thank you, lady" on the one side, "Merry Xmas" on the other and the women parted, never, perhaps to meet again.

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Ah, God's blessing will surely rest on those who remember the poor that we have with us always.

Happy was that tired mother as she prepared the fowl for the next day's dinner and filled, as best she could, the already-hung stockings and then, and only then, could her weary body find its much-needed rest.

The busy streets at last were quiet, and when only the stars were left to cheer the lonely watcher, he was summoned to telephone for the family physician, and very soon his sleigh was at the door.

While Mr. Douglas was anxiously pacing the floor he heard a slight noise, and looking up towards the stairs he saw his boys coming down.

In answer to the father's exclamation—"Why, my sons!" Charlie said, "We heard a noise, Papa, and thought it was morning," while Cliff from his father's arms whispered, "Has Santa come yet, Papa?" When the boys were once more asleep the father resumed his watch by

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the window, but not for long this time, for soon a sound came to his listening ears, the faint cry of a child. With an earnest "Thank God," the anxious man rose to his feet.

Ah! The thoughts that arise as we hear the first, feeble cry of a child born into the world. Joy is uppermost.

If the thought of what may await the child, of pain, sorrow, trials—for even childhood has its share—still joy overrides all our pessimistic fears.

We think of the parental love—so like the Divine—that awaits the child. Though nights may be sleepless, days full of increasing care, the love never falters, the care never fails. The joy of possession overrules all.

Mr. Douglas was not long alone.

In a little while the curtains parted and the pretty nurse stood in the doorway and announced smilingly: "It is a boy."

"My wife?"

"Well! Both well. You will see them soon."

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AN UNEXPECTED CHRISTMAS GIFT

"We lived together, my love and I,
In our home by the quiet sea,
And a child there came to join us two,
And we thought—we thought—as he
throve and grew,
We are for death—not he."

Mr. Douglas was awakened from a short but refreshing sleep by a whispered conversation, to find a boy perched one on each side of his bed, and presently the little sister came to kiss them and say "Merry Xmas."

"Mamma is better," said Doris.
"Miss Lake says we may wish her
'Merry Xmas' after breakfast."

"Will mamma be able to see our tree?" asked the small brother.

"Not this year, Cliff," said the sister, who was already assuming wise, womanly ways with her brothers.

After a much more expeditious dressing than usual the father, grandma and children sat down to breakfast, but the small folks were too excited to eat as heartily as usual. The great event of the day to them was the tree. Cliff's brown eyes were larger

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than usual, and bright with anticipation.

The father, entering into the children's feelings, ate hurriedly, drank his coffee and then went to his wife's room. The mother was quite as excited as the children over a plan she had formed as a surprise to her little ones—another gift.

As soon as Miss Lake came up from breakfast she was consulted, and said she would be delighted to carry out her patient's plan.

After what seemed to the impatient children a weary wait they and their grandparents were called, the drawing-room door was opened and the tree in all its glory of tinsel balls, angel figures, and many lighted tapers stood before them.

They made a rush towards the tree, but their father stopped them and said: "Wait a bit, children, your mamma has a gift for you and me, not on but behind the tree, and she wishes us to have that gift first."

Then Miss Lake came forward with something in her arms.

"A doll," cried Doris.

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"A baby," said Charlie. "It is a baby."

"Yes! a baby brother," said grand-mamma, softly.

The father took his little son in his arms, and for the moment the tree was forgotten as the children kissed the soft cheek and tiny hands of the precious Xmas gift.

Then as the nurse carried the baby away, the tree claimed the attention of children and grown people alike—the servants, too, having been summoned.

The shouts of the children reached the mother's ears, and she felt amply repaid for kind thoughts and loving labors. Her busy fingers had wrapped each gift in pretty paper with the name of the owner written on a Xmas card, and each parcel daintily tied with holly ribbon.

After the gifts had all been received and admired the children were allowed to see their mother to wish her a happy Xmas and thank her for her gifts.

As Doris was very reluctantly leaving her mother she said: "Thank

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you specially, mamma, for our baby brother. Wasn't it nice of God to give him to us on Jesus' birthday?" "Yes, my darling," said her mother as she drew her little daughter's face beside her own on the pillow, "God's Xmas gift to us all, and we must thank Him for that as well as for the gift of His dear son."

A DAY OF IMPORTANCE

The precious little gift throve and grew the first year of his life, and a most important occasion was the day of his christening.

He was given the name of Lawrence, for one of his grandmamas, who felt it a great honor and loved him with all her heart.

This long name was soon abbreviated and "Larry" he was always called.

The name suited the child in some way. When he was a year old he was very ill, and no one who saw him then dared hope that even his father's and mother's devotion could save him.

He weathered all gales, however, outgrew all ills, and became a strong,

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bonny boy. Always and ever he was a child most dearly loved by everybody. Once his elder brother said, "Larry, don't speak to that dirty Sheeny." But the child said, "Poor Sheeny, he likes me," and he was right. Larry was a very mischievous child; he was often very naughty, but forgiven the moment he came contritely to you and put his dear arms about your neck. His was such a sunny disposition. He might be punished for some of his mischievous pranks or denied some childish request, and he would feel very badly, but not for long—smiles shone through tears, and he was soon his bright, happy self.

LARRY MAKES AN IMPORTANT CALL

"Oh, nurse, do hurry, grandma will soon come," said Larry, who ran again and again to the window, making his dressing a difficult matter to his nurse. Finally he was all ready, and when his grandma appeared in sight he ran to meet her and threw himself into her arms, exclaiming: "Now we will go to see the 'twin-

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nies?" "Yes! Larry was going to the Cottage Hospital to see his mother and twin brother and sister.

His excitement communicated itself to the decorous people in the street car, for he kept up an incessant chatter about the "twinnies" in his shrill voice with a rising inflection on the last syllable peculiar to himself, and which always brought a smile to the face of those who heard him. Arrived at the hospital, Larry kissed his mother in his usual loving way, but his blue eyes were looking eagerly about for the wonderful twins.

At last he spoke to the nurse who had conducted them to the room. "Nurse, where do you keep them?"

"One is beside your mamma in bed," was her answer, and she led him to the bedside where he looked at the downy head on his mother's arm and then gently kissed it.

But he was not satisfied. He looked from one to the other of those who watched him, standing first on one foot and then on the other—a habit of his when excited—and then

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almost shouted: "Fawtha said there was two."

He was allowed to go to the baby-room and see where the tenderly-cared-for little ones slept, and then came back with the nurse, who brought the wee sister and put her in her twin brother's place, giving the boy baby to an aunt, who, too, had come to see mother and children.

Larry looked from the little one in the bed to the one in auntie's arms and then in the most pleading tones imaginable he said, pointing to his small brother, and holding out his arms: "Mutha, let me have it. I won't break it." Larry was allowed to hold his little brother, and then the sister, in his arms and went home a very proud, happy little boy. He put in the fare on the car and told the conductor, who had a nice, kind face --as the child said--all about the "twinnies," and when grandma thanked the man for lifting the child down from the car he said--"All right, lady! My! he's a fine little chap."

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HOW LARRY RECEIVED AN INVITATION TO DINNER

One afternoon the spirit of mischief seemed to possess Larry. He had been regulating father's clock to the detriment of that timepiece. He had almost denuded one of his mother's ferns of its leaves, and finally, when his mother's patience was at a low ebb, the cook came up to complain that he had just carried out a gem of maple syrup, spilling what he had not succeeded in drinking.

"Oh dear!" said Mrs. Douglas, "bring him up, I will have to punish him."

Larry was in a sorry plight and his mother found it hard to repress a smile as she took off the syrup-covered clothes and washed the "sticky stuff"—as Larry said—from his face, hands and hair. Then for punishment he was put in a nearby clothes closet until he would promise to be a good boy.

Grandma, coming in a few minutes later, and asking for her favorite, opened the door of his prison and found him fast asleep on the floor.

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When she lifted him he opened his blue eyes, saying, "I'll be good Mutha." Then he was dressed and allowed to go out to play.

He went to see an aunt—one of his adorers—who lived a short distance up the street, and found her making "hermits." Of course he was given one of the cakes and then sent out again to play. In about an hour he came back again and found a most tempting array of different kinds of cakes, and at the sight he heaved a big sigh. His aunt thought he would ask for another; instead of that he said in his most winning tone: "Auntie, I'll stay for dinner if you ask me to."

Of course he received an invitation and was a very happy little guest.

We often remark of people we meet—"what a strong personality!"—but we rarely notice this trait in a young child. Among a large family connection of bright children this little lad was always the centre of attraction. Every one who knew him would have to tell others of some of his sayings.

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He went with an aunt and cousins and his sister and brothers to visit the Zoo. He was interested in all he saw, especially the elephant. After watching the big animal eating he remarked, "I don't see what an elephant has two tails for." During the laughter of those around him he evidently solved the problem to his own complete satisfaction. for he announced, with certainty expressed in face and voice, "I know! One is to eat with."

On his first visit to a popular resort, no child enjoyed its delights better than he. It was difficult to get him away from "The Bumps" and "The Old Mill," and "Happy Hooligan" elicited shouts of delight. His father took him for a last ride on "The Scenic Railway," and then carried him to the waiting car.

Those who were with him will always remember his question—and especially his own answer to it—as he left that fairyland behind. As the car left the attractive spot he asked: "Fawtha, where do all the lights come from?" His brother Charlie

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answered, "Why, Larry, those are electric lights. There are millions of them." As usual, the wee lad answered his own question. "Fawtha, I know, it's the little baby stars come down from heaven."

AN EVENTFUL DAY

An eventful day in little Larry's life, as well as in that of others, was one day in July when there was a family picnic at the lakeside. A brief shower had driven the party to a nearby pavilion, where the baskets were unpacked and their contents fully enjoyed. By that time the rain was over and the sun shining again, so the whole party wended their way to the lakeside. To reach the shore it was necessary to go around the head of a lagoon which had been formed during a recent storm.

Grandpapa Douglas had seated Doris and Cliff in a young gentleman friend's canoe to paddle across, when he paused to speak to Larry, in whose eyes tears were shining, as he wanted to go. "Larry, I'll come back for you and grandma," he said.

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The pause was fortunate, for Larry, who was perched on his father's shoulder, suddenly called out: "Look! look at my big dog in the water."

Everybody looked and it was soon apparent that it was not the dog—he was in another direction—but a young girl. The rest of her party were walking across the sands, but she had started to wade across the apparently shallow pool. She had evidently got entangled in weeds and was drowning in sight of scores of people who knew nothing of her danger. It did not take long for Mr. Douglas, Senior, to put the two children on shore and for Mr. Claxton, the owner of the canoe, to jump in, and they were soon at the spot where the poor girl had sunk from sight. They lifted her from the bed of weeds and carried her ashore.

By the time the doctor—who had been called—arrived, the rescued girl was quite conscious and was able, with assistance, to reach her boarding place—the summer home of the Y. W. C. A.

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The excitement gradually subsided and the children were once more playing in the sand or wading in the water. During his play Larry suddenly called out, "Mutha, when I'm a big man I'll pull peoples out of the water so they won't be drowned," while grandpa said, "If it had not been for Larry's sharp eyes one person would have been drowned to-day."

Before the party left the island that evening there came a message from the young lady who had so narrowly escaped death, asking her rescuers to call and see her. The two gentlemen went at once, accompanied by Larry.

They found Miss Gordon—the rescued girl—on the verandah, almost well and very grateful to them. Of course she was told of Larry's part in saving her from a watery grave and he was lifted beside her on the couch and made much of. Miss Gordon told them that she went beyond her depth, but was able to swim a little, so was not at the first mo-

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ment frightened, but her feet became entangled in some weeds she thought.

"I saw the people so near, but they did not hear my call for help, and the last thing I remember was hearing a child's shrill voice. This little man, I suppose, said the young lady with a shudder, and I distinctly saw my mother's face."

As Larry listened his eyes grew dark with thought, and he finally said: "Where is your mutha?"

"My mother is far away in British Columbia, dear."

Then as the little fellow saw the tears in the girl's eyes, he flung his arms about her neck and gave her one of his loving hugs. Thus "Larry's pretty lady," as he called her, was another added to those who loved him. A very tired little boy slept all the way home in his father's arms and was put to bed without awakening, but when the mother kissed her small son before leaving him he murmured, "I saw the pretty lady drowned."

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A warm friendship between Miss Gordon, the Douglas family and Mr. Claxton was naturally the outcome of the island adventure.

The younger children attended the B—— Street Sunday School, of which Dr. C—— was pastor, and one Sunday Larry came home with a very important air. "See my card, Fawtha? Miss Gordon gave it to me. I am in her class."

Poor little lad! The joy soon faded from his eyes of blue, for after looking at the card his father said: "Where is your hat, son?"

"I don't know, Fawtha."

"Don't know, Larry?"

"I think—I think—a boy took it," and although his eldest brother went to look for it it could not be found.

This is an instance of the troubles of a small boy's life. A hat, a rubber shoe, and his offering for Sunday School disappeared in some mysterious manner.

His parents could not refuse his earnest request to carry his offering himself, though they knew they might

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hear a boy had taken it from him on his way to school.

Who has broken my clock to-day?

Oh, papa, It was Larry.

Who has carried my scissors away?

Larry, mamma! It was Larry.

What drove the frown from papa's brow?

The winsome wiles of Larry.

What rested mamma's weary heart?

The love in the eyes of Larry.

LARRY ESCAPES PUNISHMENT AND RECEIVES AN INVITATION

Larry had delighted his kindergarten teacher all morning, and then all afternoon he had indulged in one mischievous prank after another until even his mother's patience was exhausted. Just before dinner, in the perpetration of some piece of mischief he had hurt his small brother.

Although he protested that he did not mean to hurt Edwin Wilson Douglas (he had been giving the twins their full names of late), his father said: "Larry, you will have to be punished. Which shall it be—a whipping, or go without pudding for your dinner?" Larry thought over the choice very earnestly—for he had watched the making and knew it

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was a very good pudding. Then, naturally, he did not care for the strap—at which he looked—so he said: “Fawtha, I don’t want a whipping.”

“Very well, then. No pudding, and perhaps you will be more careful and not hurt Teddy again.”

The lad was very quiet during dinner and the blue eyes never lost their dreamy look.

When Mrs. Douglas rang for the dessert, Larry looked at his father, then leaned forward, elbow on the table, his head on his hand.

When the steaming fruit pudding was placed before the father, resolution awoke in the child’s face and figure. He straightened himself in his chair, and then started to get down from his place at the table, saying: “I’m ready, Fawtha. I’ll take the whipping.”

It is needless to relate that Larry had pudding and did not get a whipping.

After dinner, during the “children’s hour,” Mr. Douglas was called to the ’phone. After a few minutes

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conversation he called Larry and told him Miss Gordon wanted to speak to him. The little fellow hurried down stairs, and being lifted up by his father, called: "Hello! Miss Gordon." "Hello! Larry, would you like to go with Mr. Claxton and me to-morrow in the canoe? We are going up the river."

"U—m! U—m!" called the small voice, shrill with excitement.

"Very well, Larry, we will call for you. Good bye!" "Good bye," said Larry.

"Thank you very much," said Larry's father. On their return to the living room, Mrs. Douglas said: "I believe that will be a match."

Her husband smiled. "How like a woman, always match-making," he said.

The next day at dinner the children began to talk of marrying.

"You will have to marry Miss Gordon, Larry," said Doris.

Charlie answered: "No! Mr. Claxton will have to marry Miss Gordon, he saved her life."

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"Why, children," said Mrs. Douglas with a glance at her husband, "you must not talk about a lady and gentleman in that way."

The children were silent a while and then Doris said: "Are you going to get married, Larry?"

"I don't know," said the child in a thoughtful tone, then, as if he had come to an important decision, he exclaimed:

"When I'm a big man I will marry my own dear mutha."

Mrs. Douglas took her small lover in her arms and kissed him tenderly, and when she looked at the boy's father she saw his eyes, too, were suffused with tears.

Ah, dear mother heart, the memory of your darling's words will never be forgotten in the years to come.

A very excited little boy, arrayed in a Buster Brown suit, was waiting for his "pretty lady" on the verandah that afternoon.

When he saw his friends coming he ran to meet them at such a rate of speed that his hat was left lying on the pavement. The hat was put on,

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his mother kissed him good bye and he departed, proudly carrying an oblong box given him by his father.

It was a beautiful afternoon, and a happy trio that sat in the pretty canoe on the lovely Shadow River.

Larry sat at Miss Gordon's feet and ate chocolates. All were for a time silent, and the only sound was made by the dip of the paddle.

Mr. Claxton looked at the fair, dreamy face of the child, then at the sweet, womanly one of the girl against whose knee he leaned, and then broke the silence.

"What are you thinking about, Larry?"

"When I'm a big man I'm going to marry my dear mutha," he said.

"Are you, dear?" said his "pretty lady."

"Yes."

Then in a very decided tone he added:

"Mr. Clakon (Claxton was one of the few words which he could not pronounce correctly), you must marry Miss Gordon."

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The girl stooped and hid her flushed face on the child's head, while into the man's eyes came a tender, eager expression.

After a short silence the man said in a low but distinct tone: "I will be a very happy man if she will let me."

"We didn't let her get drowned, you and me and grandpa, did we?" said Larry.

Then the thus far silent voice was heard, its sweetness shaken with deep feeling:

"If it had not been for those three people there would not have been an Alice Gordon here this afternoon."

As Mr. Claxton was paddling home that evening he said to Miss Gordon—looking at their small companion: "Wanted—a matchmaker."

LARRY ATTENDS A WEDDING

Another eventful day in Larry's life was that on which he attended the wedding of his "pretty lady" and Mr. Claxton.

He stood quietly between his father and mother during the ceremony, but

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was the second person who kissed the bride.

When Mrs. Claxton was leaving the wedding party to prepare for her journey, with Larry clinging to her hand, her husband said, "Larry, this my 'pretty lady' now!" "No!" said the child. Then while all waited he had a whispered consultation with his mother, when, facing his questioner, he announced triumphantly, "She is your wifes."

A few weeks later Larry was again an important member of his family circle, for he accompanied Mrs. Douglas to his "pretty lady's" post-nuptial reception. He was very happy passing cake to the ladies in the tea-room or hovering near the bride as she stood receiving the congratulations of her friends.

"By the bye, I hear this little gentleman is called 'The Match-maker.' I wonder why?" said one lady.

"We know, do we not, Larry?" said his "pretty lady."

"Yes," said that small boy, "We know."

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"And we were happy, my love and I,
By the side of the sparkling sea,
Till our son went out to a tryst with
Death

And fought—but fought with failing
breath,

And Death prevailed—not he.

"Yes, Death was there, and my love
and I,

On the shores of a gray, gray sea.
Void, void was a place that we could
not fill,

For our boy's fresh heart lay cold and
still,

And Death was there—not he."

On a chill, gray day in October
Larry came to his mother and climbed
up on her knee despite the fact that
she had a small boy perched on one
arm and a small girl on the other arm
of the chair in which she was sitting.

"Do you not feel well, Larry?"

"No, Mutha, my head aches," and
he laid a hot little head on her breast.

Mrs. Douglas thought that some-
thing had not agreed with the child's
digestion, and she administered the
usual remedies, but he grew worse
and the doctor was sent for. In a
couple of days the anxious parents
were told that their boy had diph-
theria. Yes, that dread destroyer was

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among their flock. A nurse was installed in charge of their dear little son, and another called for the other children. Then began that dreadful time of suspense when the mother's anxiety would not let her rest; when she watched her little ones sleeping and waking, wept and prayed when others slept, and listened for every sound from the isolated part of the house where her boy fought with disease and death.

The father's heart was torn with anxiety, too, but he strove to cheer his wife and appear more hopeful than he really felt.

Daily—hourly almost—the telephone bell rang as some friend asked "How is Larry?" People whom they did not know enquired day after day how he was doing.

It seemed that the care of the nurse, the skill of the physician, the mother's prayer—only God knew how she pleaded for that dear life—had at last prevailed and Larry would live. Enquiring friends were told that he was better and Mr. Douglas begged his wife to rest.

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Poor soul, she tried to hope and take some rest as others were doing, but her heart was filled with forebodings of trouble instead of being filled with hope. She was haunting the hall outside that barred door when she heard the nurse call: "Telephone for Dr. H——."

She flew down the stairs to the 'phone, and then to the door. The doctor came, hurried to the room, but alas!

"Their boy's fresh heart was still:
Death was there—not he."

Heart failure was the verdict. Ah! how often has that knell been tolled in the hearing of the broken hearted as they stood by the side of their loved ones departed.

"But while we saddened, my love and I,
Alone by the heaving sea,
There arose in me a voice which said:
'His soul has but through a doorway
sped
Which ye may pass—not he.

"His dust may lie in the straightened
tomb,
Or sink in the deep, deep sea;
But the ship of his soul seeks a larger
room:
Ye are the dead—not he.'"

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Not until their darling boy had crossed "the bar" did his parents know what a favorite he had been. Every letter they received—and some were from people they did not know—told how he was loved, and recalled some quaint saying of his. An aunt of whom he was very fond will always remember how on one occasion he flung his arms about her saying, "I do love you, auntie."

"Why do you love me, Larry?"

"Because you are so sweet to me."
Oh, the charm of a loving nature, how love responds to love given out!

When Mr. and Mrs. Douglas' anxiety for the rest of their children was over they took up again "the daily round, the common task," but there was a void that nothing earthly—not even the children spared them, could fill.

To their friends as well as to themselves it was a lonely home.

THE SECOND CHRISTMAS GIFT

The Xmas after they lost their boy was a very sad one to Mr. Douglas and his gentle wife, but for the sake

Two Christmas Gifts

of the children they felt they must make it as bright as possible.

But as they talked of gifts the mother said: "How Larry enjoyed last Xmas! He was so happy."

"Yes! How pleased he was with his big Teddy Bear," said the father with a sigh.

But all sad thoughts must be banished and the children given a happy day, and other children in less luxurious homes remembered, too.

On Xmas Eve the mother said: "'The twinnies' will be old enough to enjoy to-morrow," but her heart ached with its sadness and she told herself she dreaded the day.

But the day came, and the children were perfectly happy and free from thought of care.

At length they wearied of play and gathered about their mother. Doris noticed her mother's look of sadness and said: "Mamma, are you thinking about Larry?"

"Yes, dear."

"Larry gone to Jesus," said the baby girl, nodding her small head in a wise fashion all her own.

Two Christmas Gifts

"Mamma," said Cliff: "God gave him to us for a Xmas present. Why did He take him away?"

The mother could not answer for a moment, and Doris said: "God gave Larry to us for a Xmas present, but He wanted him back again."

"Yes, darlings, God wanted a little boy to be with Him for Xmas, and we gave Him our darling Larry, our gift to the dear Heavenly Father," said the mother softly.

"God's Xmas gift," said Charlie.

Oh, happy mother! How her children comforted her.

Yes! "A little child shall lead them."

In the years to come the sorrowing parents will think of the dear child as a gift returned to God.

L. A. D.